

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS QUOTED IN THE MEDIA ABOUT NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM
MAY 20, 1994

NBC-TV Program, "NBC Nightly News," May 20, 1994

TOM BROKAW: Now to Asia and North Korea's nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency continues to say that North Korea is in, quote, serious violation of a nuclear safeguards agreement, but the U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Perry, said today that the spent nuclear fuel that North Korea recently unloaded from a reactor has not been diverted for nuclear weapons, so far.

ABC-TV Program, "World News Tonight," May 20, 1994

JENNINGS: It is going to be an important few days for the Korean Peninsula. Unless international inspectors, who are in North Korea now, can observe precisely what the North Koreans are doing at their nuclear power plant, the outside world may never be sure whether the country is accumulating enough plutonium to fuel a nuclear weapon.

ABC's John McWethy on where things stand right now.

JOHN MCWETHY: The bad news is that North Korea is pulling fuel rods from its nuclear plant, in what is being called a serious violation of international rules. The good news -- and this is what the Clinton Administration chose to stress today -- is that the fuel rods are sitting in a nearby holding pond and have not as yet been diverted to make nuclear bombs. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, have seen the fuel rods.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM PERRY: The IAEA, in fact, has told us that it is confident that there's no diversion of the fuel that has just been discharged.

REPORTER: Do you find that to be a hopeful sign?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes.

MCWETHY: The nuclear plant in question, shown in this enhanced satellite picture, is in the same complex as a fuel reprocessing facility where North Korea is believed to have taken fuel rods five years ago and extracted enough plutonium to make one or two bombs. The U.S. does not want that to happen again.

President Clinton's national security advisers gathered at the White House to assess the next move. One new signal came from North Korea's Ambassador to China, who held a press conference in Beijing. He said his government would allow for full inspections if the U.S. would open a third round of talks on developing economic and political ties. The U.S. appears to be interested.

SECRETARY PERRY: If the issue of the discharge of the fuel can be dealt with, then I see no reason why we could not proceed to a third round.

MCWETHY: American officials say they are detecting a small change in attitude by North Korea. It may not continue. But if there is any softening at all, the Clinton Administration wants to find a way to encourage it.

John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.